



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



ISBN 9781593516833



Recreation Guide R8-RG352

January 2010

HORSEBACK RIDING

On horseback, you can journey quietly through open pine flatwoods and wet, scenic bays. Four interconnected loops traverse more than 50 miles of trails, with each loop offering unique challenges. Each trail originates at West Tower where there is a camping area with horse stalls, drinking water and a flush toilet. Horses are not permitted in developed campgrounds or recreation areas.



FLORIDA NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

The Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST) is more than just a 1,400-mile footpath spanning the length of Florida. It's an escape into nature where you can refresh, recharge and relax. From the FNST you can admire longleaf pines reaching to the clear blue sky, their scent rising from the damp needles under foot, and relax with the chirp of birds and the knock of a red-cockaded woodpecker on a tall tree.

The Osceola National Forest is home to a 22-mile segment of the FNST, best known for more than 20 boardwalks that offer views of gum swamps and other wetland areas. With trailheads within an hour of most Florida residents, the Florida Trail is an ideal place to get out and enjoy the beauty of natural Florida.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Osceola National Forest is open year round. The Osceola district office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The office is closed on all federal holidays. Please call the Olustee Depot Visitor Center for its current hours of operation.

Osceola NATIONAL FOREST



Recreation Guide

Florida

2010

Forest  Service

United States Department of Agriculture



The Osceola National Forest, located in northeast Florida, encompasses more than 226,000 acres. Comprised of two watersheds, one draining eastward into the Atlantic and one draining westward into the Gulf of Mexico, this flatwoods forest is a mosaic of low pine ridges separated by cypress and bay swamps. The Pinhook Swamp dominates the northern portion of the forest and adjoins the Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia.

The area that now makes up the Osceola National Forest has been known for its ability to produce high quality timber and, prior to federal acquisition, the forest had been heavily logged. Remnants of old railroad grades, used to transport logs to sawmills, crisscross the forest. On July 10, 1931, a Presidential proclamation established the Osceola National Forest and the area was reforested through the tireless efforts of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The Olustee Experimental Forest was established in 1931 to conduct research for the naval stores industry. From 1881 to 1949 Florida produced as much as 10 percent of the world's supply of turpentine. Trees across the forest were tapped for resin. Remnants of old turpentine camps can still be found within the forest.

In the 1960s the Forest Service began managing national forests for broader public use. Where there used to be an emphasis on timber production, management practices expanded to include recreation, water and wildlife. Since then, wise stewardship has left the Osceola National Forest with an abundance of natural and cultural resources. Today, the forest is managed for multiple uses under the mission of "caring for the land and serving people."



MOTOR VEHICLE USE

Within the Osceola National Forest, motorized vehicles are allowed on some roads and prohibited on others. Vehicles are permitted only on numbered roads. These roads are clearly marked with road signs, designating them for vehicular use. Motorized vehicles are not allowed on unmarked roads. All roads without road signs are closed to all motorized vehicles. Any forest visitor riding an unlicensed vehicle like an ATV or trail bike must stay on roads designated for unlicensed vehicles. If a road is open to unlicensed vehicles, it will be marked with a road sign depicting a jeep, motorcycle and ATV, indicating the road is for mixed use. All visitors are expected to adhere to all rules and regulations. A detailed motor vehicle use map can be obtained from the Osceola district office, the Olustee Depot Visitor Center or from <http://fs.usda.gov/osceola>.

When using the Osceola National Forest's road system, remember the following:

- All roads are two-way and are designed for slow speeds.
- Riders must comply with the state of Florida's OHV title law and possess proof of ownership.
- All riders age 15 and under must possess a certificate evidencing the completion of an approved OHV safety course.
- All riders age 15 and under must be supervised by an adult and wear a helmet, goggles and boots.
- It is a violation of state law to carry a passenger on an OHV, unless the machine is specifically designed to carry an operator and a single passenger.
- Riding is prohibited at night.
- Do not damage the resources (mudding, creating new trails). Mudding is not allowed on the Osceola National Forest.
- Wilderness areas are always closed to motorized vehicles.

Tread Lightly

- Travel responsibly on designated roads and trails or in permitted areas.
- Respect the rights of others including private property owners, all recreational trail users, campers and others to allow them to enjoy their recreational activities undisturbed.
- Educate yourself by obtaining travel maps and regulations from public agencies, planning for your trip, taking recreation skills classes and knowing how to use and operate your equipment safely.
- Avoid sensitive areas such as meadows, lakeshores, wetlands and streams unless on designated routes. This protects wildlife habitat and sensitive soils from damage.
- Do your part by leaving the area better than you found it: properly disposing of waste, minimizing the use of fire, avoiding the spread of invasive species, restoring degraded areas and joining a local OHV enthusiast organization.

LOOKING BACK

The Osceola National Forest has been home to native Floridians since the end of the Pleistocene (about 10,000 BC) through the Second Seminole War (1835-1842). A large number of prehistoric villages and settlements, as well as early farmsteads from some of Florida's first pioneers, have been discovered on the forest. The most significant historic site on the forest, however, is Olustee Battlefield – site of a decisive Civil War Battle on February 20, 1864.

On a fateful day in 1864, North met South in a battle that left more than 2,800 men dead or wounded scattered beneath the pines of what is now the Osceola National Forest. This battle is replayed every year at the annual reenactment of the Battle of Olustee. During Presidents' Day weekend the battlefield plays host to thousands of Confederate and Union soldier reenactors, sutlers and camp followers from around the nation. This normally quiet, hallowed ground is transformed into an active lesson in history.

On the other days of the year, you can stroll through history at the Olustee Battlefield State Park Visitor Center. It is filled with historical information and artifacts from the Civil War. The nearby Olustee Battlefield Trail highlights the events that led up to the battle as well as the tactics used during the battle and the aftermath – all from personal accounts, diaries and letters from soldiers who fought there. The state park is open every day from 8 a.m. until dusk and all facilities are available free of charge. For more information, visit www.floridastateparks.org/olustee/default.cfm.



OLUSTEE DEPOT VISITOR CENTER

The Olustee Depot is a small building with a big history. Dating back to the 1860s, the depot served as both a passenger and freight station and played a significant role in the development of north Florida. The Florida Gulf and Atlantic Railroad passed by the Olustee Depot transporting everything from Civil War soldiers to mail, timber, cattle, citrus and turpentine. Until the 1960s the Olustee Depot served as the hub of the community and has now been restored to serve as the center for Osceola National Forest information. This unique building lets you step back into the early 1900s while learning what the forest has to offer today.



BE AWARE

Many animals have the ability to inflict serious injury on people, and some, like alligators and bears, have the potential to kill. Slowly back away from an animal that is a potential threat. Do not swim outside of posted swimming areas.

The forest is home to many animals. Respect their personal space. If an animal reacts to your presence, you are too close.



Snakes play a beneficial role in the ecosystem by eating insects and rodents. In Florida, there are 45 snake species, but only six are venomous. The six species of venomous snakes are the southern copperhead, cottonmouth, eastern diamondback rattlesnake, timber rattlesnake, dusky pigmy rattlesnake and the eastern coral snake. If you are bitten by a venomous snake, you need to be treated and administered antivenin. Stay calm and seek immediate medical attention at the nearest hospital or medical facility.

Mosquitoes, ticks and other biting insects are common on the forest. Some insects, such as ticks, can transmit diseases. Insect repellent is a must in the summer months. For restful sleep during mosquito season, bring a screened tent.



RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

The Osceola National Forest offers a multitude of recreation opportunities including camping, picnicking and wildlife watching. You can explore the Osceola National Forest by horseback, foot or bicycle. Trails throughout the forest lead visitors to historic sites and a wilderness area. For additional information about any of the recreation activities, visit <http://fs.usda.gov/osceola>.

OCEAN POND AND OLUSTEE BEACH

Developed recreation areas are centered around Ocean Pond, a 1,760-acre natural lake. With both primitive and developed campsites, Ocean Pond campground is perfect for campers who enjoy boating, fishing or swimming. All campsites are available for a fee, on a first-come, first-served basis. Reservations are not accepted. Nestled along the southern shore of Ocean Pond, Olustee Beach provides a variety of day-use activities including swimming, picnicking and a group campsite (reservations required). Anglers are sure to enjoy Olustee Beach's barrier-free fishing pier.



BE PREPARED

One of the most important preparations before any forest outing is to learn about the destination. Visit the forest website at <http://fs.usda.gov/osceola> or call a district office or visitor center. Forest Service personnel and volunteers can provide current and site-specific information. Before you leave, make sure someone knows where you are going and when you plan to return. It is often best to travel with a companion in case of an emergency.

For minor cuts and bruises, bring along a first aid kit. Understand basic first aid and be able to identify the symptoms of heat exhaustion, heat stroke and dehydration. Make sure your physical condition meets the requirements for the activity you are planning. There is a big difference between a one-mile hike and a 10-mile hike. Check the equipment you plan to use before you leave home to make sure it is in good working order. Florida weather changes constantly, so bring clothes that will withstand the elements. Remember, rainstorms can creep up unexpectedly on summer afternoons.



While camping on the Osceola National Forest please remember the following rules:

- Dispersed camping is allowed throughout the general forest area, except during general gun hunting season which runs November through January.
- Pets are allowed in all campgrounds and on trails, but must be on leashes no longer than six feet. Pets are not allowed in swimming or picnicking day-use areas.
- Within campgrounds and other recreation sites, build fires only in fire rings, stoves, grills or fireplaces provided for that purpose. Extinguish all fires completely.
- Campgrounds and other recreation sites can be used only for recreation purposes. Permanent use or use as a principal residence without authorization is not allowed.
- At least one person must occupy a camping area during the first night and camping equipment should not be left unattended for more than 24 hours.
- Quiet hours exist in and near most campgrounds. Quiet hours are between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Keep noise at a reasonable level and be considerate of fellow visitors.

STORE YOUR FOOD PROPERLY

In order to protect the Florida Black Bear and other wildlife species, and to promote safe camping in bear country, the U.S. Forest Service implemented a Food Storage Order requiring proper storage and disposal procedures for food, garbage and other attractants.

Attractants include anything having an odor that may attract bears: food, beverages, cooking grease, toothpaste, toiletries, soap, game meat, pet food, livestock feed and garbage.

Ways to store food properly:

Store all attractants inside an approved bear-resistant container or hard-topped vehicle. For more information visit www.igbconline.org/html/container.html. Hang all attractants at least 10 feet above ground and 4 feet from any vertical support. Discard all attractants in provided bear-resistant trash receptacles. DO NOT burn or bury any attractants and take out what you bring in.



Osceola Ranger District
PO Box 70
24874 US Hwy 90
Olustee FL 32072
(386) 752-2577

Olustee Depot Visitor Center
PO Box 70
5892 North County Road 231
Olustee FL 32072
(386) 752-0147

Supervisor's Office
325 John Knox Road
Suite F-100
Tallahassee FL 32303
(850) 523-8500

WEBSITE: <http://fs.usda.gov/osceola>
TDD Relay Service of Florida: 1-800-955-8770

